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ABSTRACT

Although the practical applications of language contribute to the development of language proficiency, United States schools have persevered in a formal language over a language-in-use emphasis in the language curriculum. A focus on gaining isolated language skills has led to a serious neglect of the social aspects of language. Public concern grows over low test scores and the inability of students to apply language skills, and so the remedy prescribed is largely more of the same. This continuance of a formal language emphasis also tends to reflect and legitimize the dominant culture. By disallowing personal (nonschool) knowledge and emphasizing public (school) knowledge, language instruction not only limits language learning, it limits the content of that learning and its challenges. However, control and autonomy among those students and teachers who do not accommodate to the status quo can take the form of resistance, and this can lead to the formulation of alternatives and change. Receptive and expressive language skills are crucial, not only because they are central to all school learning, but because they establish the basis for lifelong communicative competence. The ability to put language to practical use to expand knowledge, apply what is known, and establish creative alternatives and resolutions to problems has implications for cultural production and reproduction. (FL)

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Language Learning and the Practical Use of Language in School

by
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Introduction

It is commonly accepted that language plays a crucial role in the process of learning. And yet, it is not uncommon to find that currently in US schools, students have little opportunity for the practical use of language, and that language curriculum itself places little emphasis on areas of language learning beyond the acquisition of formalized language skills. This contradiction raises considerations about the need for alternative areas of emphasis in language curriculum and about the possible implications of the meanings pupils take from experiencing this limited form of language instruction.

While numerous recent reports on the state of US schools call for improvements, the reforms suggested are largely for "more of the same." The continuation of this emphasis reflects the impact of the dominant culture and illustrates the way schools contribute to its legitimization and reproduction.

After a brief look at language learning in schools, especially oral language learning, I discuss a continued emphasis in the US on a language curriculum that presents language broken into its component parts, removed from its practical uses. I then raise some considerations which emerge from this emphasis, such as the role of autonomy and control in school language learning. Finally, through a study of the meanings students take from their experience of oral language learning in the first grade, I consider some possible implications of the meanings taken and resistance shown by students to this emphasis for the production and reproduction of culture.

Language Learning

Classrooms are language laden environments[1] which hold rich potential for language learning. However, what to emphasize in language instruction has been a topic of some concern in the development of language curriculum. This ongoing debate is centered on the relevance of formal language learning to language use.

Two approaches to Language Learning in School. Two major camps have dominated the field of language curriculum — one which favors an emphasis on formal language learning and one which takes language in use as its prime emphasis (Dobson, L., et al, 1981). The formal language learning position concentrates on grammatical structures, conventions and rules taught and evaluated with little, if any, concern for content or context. The language in use position emphasizes the application of meaningful language content in a social context and uses successful language performance as criteria for evaluation. The former is in-

fluenced, in part, by the work of linguists such as deSaussure and Chomsky; the latter, by linguists such as Halliday, Hymes, Volosinov and Labov.

According to Rosen (1981), the area of deSaussure's work which suggests examining language in small units out of context (his term, langue) was taken up by linguists in the early 1900's and influenced the field of linguistics for almost half a century. deSaussure's interest in aspects of language in use, that is, what is actually said with all its variations (his term, parole) was largely ignored by linguists.

More recently, the influence of Chomsky has also served to further the formal language learning approach. Chomsky separated what speakers actually do (performance) from the individual internalized rule system (competence) and while he acknowledged the creative aspects of language use, he did not study it as he did competence (Rosen, 1981). This duality helped to establish a firm distinction between formal language learning and language use.

The past two decades have shown an increasing interest in the study of language within social context. With the rise of the field of sociolinguistics, language study moved away from seeing language learning and its use as separate considerations. According to this view, the influence of society on language is not something which can be set aside. This is an on-going, reciprocal process in which language and verbal thought are stored and produced within society while, at the same time, language and verbal thought are stored and produced within the mind. The work of sociolinguists, coupled with the influence of others, such as Vygotsky and Freire, indicate that the social aspects of language cannot be ignored; that formal language learning cannot be separated from language use. From this perspective, "all uses of language are inescapably social, and this social dimension is not . . . an 'aspect' since it is a feature of language function that is profoundly interconnected with language form" (Griffith, 1981, p. 3). In other words, language is not only an abstract system, but also an essential process done by, to, with and for persons. It is "how we offer one another meanings: how, in interaction, we modify one another's meanings" making them our own (Rosen, 1981, p. 11). Unlike Chomsky's view of competence, Hymes's (1974), communicative competence is dependant upon both knowing and using the language system in the day to day world. For children to achieve communicative competence, they need opportunities to utilize language in a wide range of speech events so they can develop that knowledge of language in use which is only learned in social interaction (Rosen, 1981). From this perspective, then,

language competence is seen in performance -- in the ability to use one's knowledge of the language system in the social world.

Schooling and Language Learning

A Language for Life (Bullock, et al, 1975), a report of a committee of inquiry appointed by the British government, has been influential in setting the direction for the development of language curriculum. This report suggests that language is a living process, that language use is tied directly to learning throughout life, and that school language learning must engage the learners themselves since it is in school that language learning establishes the means by which further learning happens. Because language provides the vehicle for most school studies, the Bullock report suggest a Language Across the Curriculum approach, that is, one in which the study of English (or any native language) provides a service to other school disciplines (p. 192-3). From this view, English is seen as a "process subject", that is, it is "distinctive in the curriculum in that it is both all pervasive and yet has relatively little subject matter of its own" (Newsom, et al, 1963, quoted in Pugh, 1981, p. 92). Similarily, Barnes, et al, (1969) pointed out that learning a subject in school entails learning the language appropriate to that subject.

It is the all pervasive nature of language throughout the school curriculum that has inspired recent language learning research conducted by the Talk Workshop Group, a group of teachers from two London schools who explore students' language learning. They began by looking at Writing Across the Curriculum, but soon found that "writing, central as it is to schooling is often a symptom, an end product among several others." (Richmond, 1982), p. 9) They therefore expanded their efforts to focus upon talk, because this "seemed the best chance of looking at how we were doing our job, and how others were doing their's, of better understanding the real causes and effects within the learning/teaching process and making improvements (Richmond, p. 8). After seven years of studing transcripts of their students talk in connection with topics as diverse as chemistry lessons or writing a class play, they provide an exciting contribution to the understanding of how language use facilitates language learning; how it functions as a vehicle for all school learning.

Oral Language Learning in School. Unfortunately, the powerful role of language use in all learning, so clearly seen in early childhood, remains largely untapped in most schools, particularly in the area of oral language. James Britton (1970) reminds us that language provides a "key way" of representing experience

and symbolizing knowledge, thus facilitating learning; that " . . . talk is a major instrument of learning in infancy; that the infant learns by talking and that he learns to talk by talking." (p. 129, Britton's emphasis). He goes on:

> "In trying to explain why it is that normal children succeed in this astonishing task of learning to talk we suggest it was because the two tasks — learning in the most general sense, that is, making sense of world, and learning to talk -- are so closely enmeshed. When we arrive at the school stage we must add writing and reading to talking, but the stress upon the operational value of language remains the same." (p. 129)

Moreover, Britton suggests that in school students need opportunities to practice language -- to make sense of the world through meaningful use of language:

> . . . they must practise language in the sense in which a doctor 'practises' medicine and a lawyer 'practises' law, and not in the sense in which a juggler 'practises' a new trick before he performs it (p. 139, Britton's emphasis).

Although the linkages between talking and learning have been well established (e.g. Vygotsky, Bruner, Piaget) opportunities for oral language development in schools remains limited. According to Wilkinson, "oracy", the ability to speak and listen, needs to be developed as much as literacy; teachers need to provide situations for students to expand their speech capacities (1965). Furthermore, expressive skills tend to nurture other referential forms of communication (Sapir, 1961).

Rosen and Rosen (1973) demonstrate that school experience and language learning are joined through their ethnographic study of infant schools in Britain. Among their rich data, they explore student talk about teacher established topics in small groups and find that, given the opportunity, the talk in these groups reaches surprisingly high levels, particularly when no adult is present. While this should not be taken as a call to minimize the teacher's role in school language learning, the Rosens do suggest a reconsideration of that role, raising questions about whether teacher-controlled, formalized lessons intrude upon potentially higher levels of language usage and learning.

Barnes (1975) also suggest providing opportunities for students to explore their school work through informal talk in small groups:

> The more a learner controls his own language strategies, and the more he is enabled to think aloud, the more he can take responsibility for formulating explanatory hypotheses and evaluating them. (p. 28-29)

> Curriculum should be . . . composed of meaningful activities . . . not only is talking and writing a major means by which people learn, but what they learn can often hardly be sistinguished from the ability to communicate it. (p. 20)

It is through meaningful activities, says Barnes, in which students are encouraged to "bring everyday knowledge to bear on a school task" (p. 29) that language learning thrives.

Language Learning in United States Schools. In 1970 England, James Britton could say:

> It is to our national credit . . . that only in rare instances do children in our infant schools spend the day stitting at desks. Rather, they are . . . going off to ask somebody something or tell him something else. (p. 129)

However, it was not then and is not now a common occurrence to find such informality in American elementary schools. Over the past several decades, with the exception of the Open Education movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, American schools have taken a strong formal language approach. Typically, in the 1980s our classrooms tend to provide little opportunity for practical language usage such as informal talk among students about school topics.

Most efforts among scholars to move US language curriculum away from this formal language position, have had little lasting impact on language instruction. For example, in 1968, and again in 1983, with the re-issue of the Universe of Discourse, James Moffett argues for a language in use over the prevailing formal language approach. He advises against teachers' overuse of textbooks, of overemphasizing "pedagogic input" before carrying out a language task on the grounds that students become more concerned with "error-avoidance" than with making meaningful discourse happen. Moffett describes his concept, discourse, as an attempt to prevent the common view that English is "a separate subject in an array of other subjects." (1968, p. 212). He feels that such separations are false and only serve to distance students from understanding that language facility enables learning of all kinds.

The formal language position continues to dominate approaches to language instruction in US schools. Over the past ten years, the "back to basics" movements has focused on this view through an emphasis on the acquistion of minimum competencies which present isolated skill components inorder to teach and test them more efficiently. The result of this emphasis is a language program largely remote from the learner's experience. Such a program assumes that once drill and

evaluation of disparate skills indicate they are "learned, the learner will be able to apply them in other areas of the curriculum and utilize them in practical situations both in and out of the school setting. I believe, this has proved to be a false assumption. The focus on drill and evaluation removed from practical use, so reminescent of the "juggler practising a new trick for a performance," has led to little meaningful learning. Because language is pivotal to all other learning this emphasis has had far reaching effects. The recent wave of concern for school reform seen in numerous commission reports on the state of US education indicate frustration and disappointment in the level of performance our students display once they leave school. And yet, the reform which these commission reports call for is, largely, "more of the same", reinforcing the formal language position.

In the next section I pose some considerations which grow out of the prepetuation of a formal language approach to language curriculum in US schools.

Considerations

Currently, a plethora of reports on schooling in the US has brought the need for school reform to the attention of both citizens and educators. Central to this debate is the need to re-examine language curriculum selection, implementation and evaluation. Ability in the area of receptive and expressive language not only forms the foundation for all school learning, but also establishes the basis for life-long communicative competence. With, communicative competence comes the possibility of a critical human agency, that is, activity based on our own and other's clearly expressed and understood practical concerns. Language competence, then, is a policical consideration.

A continued focus on the acquisition of isolated language skills taught and evaluated out of context leads schools to neglect the social aspects of language and provides students little opportunity to utilize these skills for practical purposes. Because it is removed from the learner's life experience, the kind of learning which follows is generally short lived; its utility unclear to students beyond that of the correct response to a test item.

Freire sees true language facility as more than the acquisition of certain skills.

> It is to dominante these skills with consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands, it is to communicate graphically . . . an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation of producing a stand of intervention producing a stand of intervention in one's context. (1973, p. 48)

For Freire, personal knowledge is an integral part of the learning process which enables the learner to move toward a critical human agency. This view presumes a "problematic" rather than a "given" view of knowledge, that is, that knowledge is open for question; that the learner is not a passive recipient. It is through critical consideration of meaningful topics that stem from the learner's history and life experience that empowerment and autonomy can grow. Educators must enter into dialogue with their students, says Freire, in order to tap the meaningful topics which give utility to newly acquired skills.

The move toward a "more of the same" approach as the remedy for our schools' ills raises additional considerations such as: What is the role of ideology in curriculum development? How do autonomy and control influence language learning in schools? What are the implications of the meanings students take from being taught language in this manner? Because questions such as these go beyond the confines of this paper, I touch on them only briefly.

Schools, as agents for the culture, help to establish continuity by perpetuating dominant views and values. The persistance of a formal language approach is a reflection of the ideology of positivism and its effect on language curriculum. The impact of the "age of science and technology" has established positivism as the dominant ideology in our culture -- as a particular world view, a rationality which dominates the way issues are approached and explored. Positivism tends to isolate what is being considered from its context and break it into its component parts for systematic examination, thus de-politicizing it. According to Giroux, "language practices represent one feature of the dominant culture that schools legitimate in varing degrees" (1983, p. 214). He suggests that the continued emphasis on a formal approach displays the ideology of positivism as seen in Tyler's (1950) influence on curriculum development which separates learning from its political connections (Giroux, 1983). Hollingsworth (1974) indicates that deficiencies of curriculum, even when they are blatant, are likely to be tolerated and recommended so long as they serve to support an intended social order.

I now turn to a limited discussion of the issue of autonomy and control in school language learning, its impact on the meanings students take from both the direct and hidden curriculum and the implications these meanings hold for realizing a critical human agency.

Autonomy and Control

Central to any consideration of schooling is the issue of autonomy and control[2]. My intention is to consider the role of autonomy and control in the area of school

language learning by looking at the way language curriculum is presented and received. After a discussion of the extent to which student's personal (non-school) knowledge is allowed to enter the public (school) knowledge of the language curriculum, I discuss resistance to both a language use and a formal language emphasis for oral language development.

Personal and Public Knowledge in Oral Language Curriculum. The terms, "personal knowledge" and "public knowledge" used here are taken from Berlak and Berlak's[3] (1981) conception of the dilemma, personal vs. public knowledge which represents opposing positions about what is worthwhile and adequate knowledge. The public knowledge position favors knowledge which is external to and independent of the knower; the personal knowledge position values knowledge established through its relationship to the knower. "Public knowledge may be seen as composed of traditions of knowledge which have stood the test of time . . . skills, perspectives, facts, ways of knowing" (p. 145). The personal knowledge position, on the other hand, holds that knowledge is useful and significant in so far at it enables one to make sense of experience. The extent to which teachers' patterns of resolution to this dilemma favor one pole or the other is one reflection of the degree of autonomy and control afforded to their pupils. Dewey (1923) commented on the "great waste" that comes from denying the learner's personal knowledge.

> From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in the school comes from his inability to utilize the experience he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while, on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school. That is the isolation of the school — its isolation from life. When the child gets into the schoolroom he has to put out of his mind a large part of the ideas, interests and activities that predominate in his home and neighborhood. (Dewey, 1923, p. 75)

The student's "isolation from life" is compounded by being denied the opportunity to speak in school. A study by Orazco (1980) displays teacher control of the amount and nature of student classroom talk. Observers recorded the length of time over a full school day that students were directed or induced to speak by the teacher. Out of a mean of 13,835 seconds of teacher supervised classroom time in 42 classrooms from pre-school to sixth grade, children spoke an average of 39 seconds per day. Most of this "talk" consisted of monosyllabic responses to direct questions. The balance of the time, they were expected to be silent and were admonished if they were not. Orazco concluded that in these schools children's

oral speech learning occurs largely outside the classroom. Given the social basis for language learning discussed earlier, personal knowledge should be an integral component of the classroom language curriculum, particularly in the case of oral language development.

While it is common to find differing definitions of "English" as language study, a public knowledge emphasis on the study of written over oral forms has prevailed indicating the school's strong control over pupils' language learning. Pugh (1981) describes two major views of language study in addition to the formal language emphasis (which he calls "functional") they are, "literature" and "personal/social development through English." The "literature" view can take on the form of the study of children's own creative writing and oral story making, or, the study of the work of great authors. On the one hand, the "personal/social development" definition can provide children with the opportunity to interpret their own ideas, particularly if there is free choice in the topic to be written or discussed; on the other, only transmission of information and cultural values can be allowed. The extremes within both these forms are clear indicators of resolutions to the personal/public knowledge dilemma. Typically, there has been little opportunity made available to students to contribute their personal knowledge to the language curriculum. Pugh reports that the elementary school rarely allows for oral and listening language development. Rather, it is common for the elementary school to be seen as the proper site for the establishment of "functional" written language skills and therefore is seldom involved with the "literature" or "personal/social" language approaches (Pugh,1981). Elitist influences in English study have rejected personal experience as the voice of the "masses"[4] in favor of those traditional or contemporary works accepted as "great literature". In speaking of the revered place of literature study as "English" curriculum (a comparatively recent trend in the history of language instruction) Pugh indicates that "it is literature rather than language study, written language rather than spoken language, which has recently held high status in the subject" (P. 87).

Young (1971) describes "high status knowledge" as having four characteristics. It emphasizes written language; it is abstract; it is individualistic both in learning and in assessing; and it is unrelated to non-school knowledge. The hidden or unintended message emerging from this emphasis suggests that oral language is less important than written; that concreteness is less valued than abstract thought; that group work or cooperative effort can be avoided; group assessment discounted; and tht knowledge not related to school knowledge is of little value (Young,1971).

Becuase an oral language program would involve "talk", that is, student talk concerning both personal (non-school) knowledge as well as public (school-sanctioned) knowledge, additional control issues are raised. Richmond (1982) points our that his students have learned that work is something you do with a pencil, while talk is "messing about":

> Children have firmly conditioned ideas about what 'work' is, and are likely to see any departures by the teacher from those ideas a weakness to be exploited. (p. 5)
>
> Talking implies independence, autonomy, authority. If we offer these things to children, in however small a measure, rather than keeping them all for ourselves, we implicitly subvert the school's role as a controlling institution. (p. 181)

The Learner's Response: Meanings Taken / Resistance Shown. The term, meaning is used here to refer to the implications of an act or gesture taken by children as they are schooled (Mead, 1934, Berlak and Berlak, 1981). In other words, it is the sense learners make of the schooling experience -- its utility for themselves in their lives outside as well as in the school. Students' experiences with school or public knowledge and its relationship to non-school or personal knowledge help to shape their perceptions of themselves as learners, of school learning and of what society considers to be acceptable knowledge.

What is the response to a steady diet of language instruction remote from life experience? Initial disappointment followed by conformity or resistance (Roth, 1981) is more common than generally realized. Giroux reminds us that while dominant ideologies are transferred by schools,

> ideologies are also imposed on students, who occasionally view them as contrary to their own interests and either resist them openly or conform to them underpressure from school authorities . . . dominant ideologies are not just transmitted in schools . . . they are often met with resistance. (1983, a. p. 272, Giroux's emphasis)

A comparatively new area of consideration in educational theory, the concept of resistance explores the complex relations between schools and the dominant society. The analyses which grow out of these neo-maxist accounts[5] of day-to-day school life can point out the emancipatory as well as constraining effects of schooling. In other words, students (as well as teachers) may respond to the dominant, ideology-influenced formal language curriculum with resistance as well as acceptance. The resistance offers a view of the dia-

lectical manner in which schooling events occur.

Richmond (1982) encountered several levels of resistance when implementing the Talk Workshop Group's program. The belief that language is instrumental in all learning which first led the group to consider alternatives to the curriculum at their schools was not a simple matter to put into practice. Upon deciding that oracy was a concrete goal worth changing their usual program for, Richmond describes his own and his students' resistance to the change.

> On the one hand a large and distinguished literature telling us that talk is vital to learning; on the other, such an accumulation of odds against the teacher who tries to make space for regular, extended talk in the classroom that many of us privately decide it isn't worth the agony. (p. 182)

He found he had to force himself to ignor a persistant inclination to avoid the change. One of his first tasks was to establish talk as a valid kind of "work", rather than "something you get disciplined for" (p. 181). His students were uneasy about letting go of what they considered a prime means of resistance to school: disruptive talk. They were used to 'talking' as a distraction from, or a means to subvert, the teacher's attention, rather than a school-sanctioned purpose:

> Speech has gone from being a central act of knowing in the infant to being, in the classroom, at least, a level of rebellion and resistance in the teenager . . . A lot of people regard children talking as a threat, except under the strictest of conditions . . . as a hindrance to the efficient running of the school, as a potential slur on their reputations as teachers who can control classes (p. 181)

However, Richmond and the other participating teachers persisted because they were determined to move their students away from the very low levels of interest and learning displayed in resistance to the formal language program and its effect on the total school curriculum. It is to their credit that the Talk Workshop Group did so, as they were to accomplish a true Language Across the Curriculum program through oral language use in inner city schools.

The Talk Workshop Group's work involved eleven, twelve and thirteen year olds. The next section provides an illustration of the use of oral language curriculum with six year olds through the language activity, Show and Tell Time.

Show and Tell Time

Show and Tell Time is a language activity with a language in use, rather than a formal language base. Although variations are recommended for older children[6]

this expressive and receptive language activity an enduring favorite of young children, has been most widely used in elementary schools. Over the years, it has managed to survive most curriculum fads and changes in one form or another, but recent pressures for higher test scores have placed demands on the use of classroom time which preclude activities not given over to the instruction and drill of basic skills. As a result, it is not uncommon to find that teachers have had to reduce (or drop altogether) Show and Tell Time as a planned language activity.

This is unfortunate since Show and Tell Time holds the potential to provide meaningful and practical applications of crucial language skills -- speaking, listening, reflecting upon what is said and what one is about to say, organizing thoughts into sequence, et cetera. Here, children talk or listen to each other in order to share personal thoughts, experiences, possessions. While the form of the activity is determined by the teacher, the content of what is shared at Show and Tell Time is determined by the speaker. Therefore, it represents one of the few school-sanctioned and school-planned opportunities for children to insert <u>personal knowledge</u> into the dominately <u>public knowledge</u> classroom setting. During the process, a child can come to see what knowledge the school deems appropriate or in-appropriate, how it is to be shared and whether or not it may be challenged. The way the activity is structured, the part of the day and amount of time given over to it, the conventions established around receiving time to talk and how to go about talking are indicators of knowledge control and thus, hold implications for the production and reproduction of culture.

Over the past twenty years, in my role as either elementary classroom teacher or supervisor of students in early field expereinces and student teachers, I have had the opportunity to observe numerous forms of Show and Tell Time. They range from those in which teachers, completely detached as the correct papers, give no attention to the activity other than to call on the next talker; to teachers who participate as peers with their students, themselves requesting a turn to talk from a child leader; to a strictly controlled setting in which the teacher approves of each topic before a child speaks. I now discuss two examples of Show and Tell Time, excerpts from a study of the meanings children take from their school experience in the first grade.

The study is based on a series of classroom observations and interviews with children, their parents and teachers over a ten month period in two first grade classrooms of the same public elementary school. Particular attention is given

to the impact of the teachers' actions, that is, their daily classroom decisions, on the meanings that accompany and are transmitted through reading and language instruction.

Theoretical Framework. Following Berlak and Berlak (1981), the study is based on a critical interpretation of Mead's, social behaviorism. It focuses on the idea of the self as "reflexive" or self-interacting -- that we act accoring to how we perceive the world. The "inside" interpretations we place on our experience, both past and present, influence our "outside" actions. Mead's concept of the act assumes a unity of thought and action, rather than their distinction into separate entities. This view of behavior, then, is one of continous transformation. In the everyday reality of classrooms, the relationship of student to teacher is an on-going process of negotiation. As teachers teach six year olds their decisions to act in particular ways rather than others (whether or not they are consciously aware of it) evolve simultaneously from a thought-action base. The impact of these decisions over time can lead to particular meanings which influence children's perceptions of schooling, literacy and oracy.

In this study the term, meaning is used as conceptualized by George H. Mead and interpreted by Berlak and Berlak (1981).

> The central factor in adjustment of individuals to environment is 'meaning'. Meaning arises and lies within the field of the relation between the gesture of a given organism and the subsequent behavior of this organism . . . (Mead, 1934, p. 75-76).

For Mead "meaning is . . . a relation between certain phases of the social act; it is not an 'idea' as traditionally conceived." Meaning is " . . . not a process going on in the mind . . . it is an external, overt, physical or physiological process going on the actual field of experience" (Mead, 1934, p. 76-79). As such, meaning can be observed. "Meaning', then, is used here to mean the implications of an act or gesture taken by children as they are schooled.

Method and Procedures. The approach used in this study is an outgrowth of two rationalities: what is generally known as 'interpretive' research (Schutz, Garfinkel, Goffman, Smith, L.M., Beittle, etc.), and what others (Fay, B., 1975, Berlak and Belak, 1981 and Giroux, 1981) call critical social science. It acknowledges the connections between social theory and social practice. It is based on the idea that the observer interprets intentional action, that the

action observed occurs within a given social context, that the actors share certain basic conceptions of meanings and that they act in terms of these meanings.

At a meeting in which the two first grade teachers and the principal agree to participate, procedure for the study is established. The number of children who are to take part as well as the frequency and duration of observations and interviews is established at this time. All parents of the fifty entering first grade children receive a description of the study and an invitation to have their child participate. After a random selection from those responding, ten children become the primary subjects. The data (both participant observation and taped, informal interview) is collected prior to the opening and following the coloseing of school as well as over the course of the school year.

The dilemmas of schooling language (Berlak and Berlak, 1981) is used as a descriptive and analytic tool. These terms connect patterns of resolution to consciousness, context or social structure, and to the acculturation process. The Berlaks take a critical interpretation of George H. Mead's social behaviorism, linking his conceptualization of th act to cultural transmission. Written in the form of sixteen dilemma statements, this "language of schooling acts" provides a way to order the complexity that characterizes the thought and action of teachers. Portraying the schooling process in terms of the exceptional as well as the dominant patterns of resolution provides a more complete analysis of the experience of shcool and its impact. It allows for a more realistic view of the seemingly contradictory actions of teachers which frequently manifest the continuous reflexivity of the school act. The dilemmas of schooling, then, take into account both the particular and the larger influences which together comprise the process of schooling.

[insert list of dilemmas about here]

The control dilemmas depict pulls felt upon and within teachers concerning focus of control with regard to time, operations and realm of children's development. The societal dilemmas focus on issues of equality, of justice and relations between social groups. The curricular dilemmas are concerned with the similarities and variations in how teachers treat knowledge and ways of knowing and learning.

Both participant observation and taped, informal interview are used to become familiar with the school world of the six year old. Interviews with the

THE DILEMMAS OF SCHOOLING

The Control Dilemmas

Teacher vs. Child Control (Time)

Teacher vs. Child Control (Operations)

Teacher vs. Child Control (Standards)

Whole Child vs Child as Student (Realm)

The Societal Dilemmas

Childhood Continuous vs. Childhood Unique

Equal Allocation of Resources vs. Differential Allocation

Equal Justice Under Law vs. Ad Hoc Application of Rules

Common Culture vs. Sub Group Consciousness

The Curriculum Dilemmas

Child as Person vs. Child as Client

Personal Knowledge vs. Public Knowledge

Knowledge as Content vs. Knowledge as Process

Knowledge as Given vs. Knowledge as Problematical

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Learning is Holistic vs. Learning is Molecular

Each Child Unique vs. Children Have Shared Characteristics

Learning is Social vs. Learning is Individual

children and their mothers are conducted preceding and following the school year. Observations of children and teachers through the school day take place during the school year. Interviews with children, their teachers and the principal individually and in small groups are conducted through the year. In this way a composite image of the child's perspective of schooling and the expereince of language learning in school is assembled.

The Setting. A public school located in a suburb of a mid-west metropolitan area is the site of the study. Constraints for language learning appear to be at a minimum here, that is, it is an affluent community where home and school appear to share common educational goals. The well-maintained building with a modified "U" shaped floor plan and central courtyard is situated among privately owned, single family dwellings. For the most part, the people living in this area are college graduates with management-level business or professional careers.

The two first grade teachers are both highly regarded by the school and community. Each is in her mid-forties; has about fifteen years of teaching experience; uses the same basal reading program. They teach in classrooms which are virtually identical in size, room arrangement, resources and number of children. And yet, they present two distinct learning environments to their pupils.

Show and Tell Time In Mrs. Reiss's Room

Mrs. Reiss refers to a list of children's names on the front chalkboard that was written by the children who want a turn to speak to the class at Show and Tell Time. She follows the list sequentially as she calls on children to speak. Everyone, except those who are still completing their work assignments, gives full attention to the speakers.

(. . .)[7]

Charlie is speaking. He says that he and his family went bowling last night.

Peter:	(speaking without being called on) Were you on "Bowling for Dollars?" (refering to a television show) (he laughs)
Charlie:	(he says nothing -- does not smile -- looks at Mrs. Reiss)
Mrs. R.:	Just ignore him, Charlie. Think first, then ask a question.
Charlie:	What did I do first? Dinner first or bowling? Sam?
Sam:	Dinner.
Charlie:	Yes. (he thinks a minute, gives up and sits down)

Mrs. R.: Next time, say, "Who can tell me what I did first and second?" It's too easy when you tell them. William, you may speak next.

William: (he tells a story of an incident when he had to be taken to the hospital by a baby-sitter) How old was I? George?

George: Four.

William: Yes. Where did my Mom go? Annie?

Annie: To the movies.

William: What did the baby-sitter do after I stopped breathing? Philip?

Philip: Helped you start to breathe again?

William: (begins to respond)

Terry: (interrupting William) I want to tell about when I got thirty stitches. It was

Mrs. R.: (interrupting Terry) No! You can't tell something! You must answer questions! Bonnie will speak next and Omar will ask questions for what she says.

Bonnie: (she looks surprised and a bit put out) I got this book ... .

Mrs. R.: Omar, say a question about Bonnie's book.

Omar: (Omar is the child new to the country and the language. He stands, but says nothing. Mrs. Reiss calls him to her side and whispers a question in his ear.) When did Bonnie get the book?

(. . .)

Edward has just finidhed telling about a birthday dinner party at his cousin's. There is a pasue in which nothing is said and no one raises a hand to speak:

Mrs. R.: Do you want to ask questions, or not?

Edward: (after a pause) Ask questions?

Mrs. R." Yes

Edward: What was I doing? Sandy?

Sandy: Dancing?

Edward: No.

George: Chasing?

Edward: (spelling the word) c h a s e i n g?

Mrs. R.: Drop the 'e' vowel so you only have one.

Edward: Oh.

George: Yes.

Edward: Yes. Did we have d i n n e r? Joyce?

Joyce: Yes.

Edward: Reggie, what did they have that I ate all of?

Reggie: M and Ms?

Edward: Right. What was I doing?

Bill: You were running aroung?

Edward: No.

Bill: You were eating?

Edward: Yes, I was hiding behind -- I think I tried to run, but I couldn't find a place to run, so —

Mrs. R.: You add on. You must think first, then tell it all and ask you questions.

Edward: Think first?

Mrs. R.: Yes. Think first then organize it, then be-begin. Zia you are next. (her emphasis)

Zia: (shows her caterpiller)

Mrs. R.: You can ask Cassandra a question (Cassandra had been talking to another child while Zia was showing the caterpiller)

Zia: Where did I get the caterpiller?

Cassandra: (after a minute) Found it in the garage? (she looks relieved to see that her answer is correct)

Mrs. R.: Ask Peter a question.

Zia: I can't think of one.

Mrs. R.: Who found it?

Peter: (he cannot answer -- apparently he, too had been talking to someone while Zia spoke)

Show and Tell Time in Miss Orlette's Room

(. . .)

It is 2:15 p.m. when Show and Tell Time begins. Miss Orlette writes the initials of children who want a turn to talk on the chalk board.

Brad: (shouting out) No! The Birthday Boy first! (his emphasis)

Miss O." That's very nice, Brad. (she replaces his initials for those of the first person on the list.) Does everyone have juice and a cupcake? Okay, let's get started.

After Frankie talks, Miss Orlette calls on Carl.

Carl: (referring to the list of initials) No, It's Kathie next!

Miss O.: Oops! Thank you, Carl.

Kathie: (She goes to the teacher's desk for a clear plastic box of shells) This shell picture shows all the shells I saw in Florida. (She held up samples)

Several children are chatting to each other quietly as Kathie talks.

Miss O.: Speak out, Kathie.

Kathie: (speaking a bit louder) I have one of these . . . (points to the picture)

Miss O.: Anyone have a question? (she asks the group who are talking to stop) I have one Kathie, did you pick the picture out or did someone give it to you?

Kathie: I did. (she walks to her seat)

Brad: That curled up shell is a snail shell, isn't it?

Kathie: (from her seat across the room from Brad) I don't know.

Miss O.: Carl, now it is your turn.

Brad: (talking to Kathie) Looks like a snail shell to me.

Brad and Kathie continue to talk about the shell as Carl begins.

Miss O.: Look, Brad, it's Carl's turn. (to the class) Be good listerers, children.

All children stop chatting to each other and start to pay more attention to the speaker:

Carl: Yesterday, I'm on the soccer team and . . . I got a home run. I got ten people out on the outfield and . . .

Cory: (taking a long breth) Oh! Brother! Not soccer -- that's baseball!

Miss O.: Which do you mean, Carl?

Carl: Oh, I mean baseball.

Cory: And I don't believe you got ten people out!

Carl: Well . . . (he pauses, twising his lower lip)

Miss O.: I think he means he did real well, right, Carl?

Carl: Yes. (He smiles)

Miss O.: That's what you need to say, then. Carl, try to say the words that tell what happened and wht you are thinking. It's not easy, I know. (to the class) Maybe we can all help him.

Miss Orlette erases the initials of each child as s/he has a turn. In some instances, the teacher calls on the next person; in others, s/he goes before the class and begins to talk without being called on. As they listen, the children dringk punch and eat cupcakes.

(. . .)

Karen: My fish died.

Miss O.: Do you want to say any more about it?

Karen: No (she sits down)

Miss O.: Sara, you're next.

Sara: (showing a book) May I read it?

Miss O.: You can read one page.

Sara: (reads asking for help twice)

Miss O.: I love those Frog and Toad books. I can't wait for tomorrow when you'll read me more -- after you practice. It will be great. (announcing the next person) Now, Jim.

Jim: (walks to theteacher's desk and brings a robot to show the class) I just got new batteries, so I know it will work. (he demonstrates)

Someone shouting:

I used to have one like that. Did you get it for Christmas?

Jim: No. I got it from Target a long time ago.

Miss O.: Jim, did you pay for it with your own money?

Jim: No. My granddad bought it for me a long time ago, but I got the batteries with my own money.

Miss O.: Any more questions? (pausing. when no one speaks) Jim, what's the nicest thing about it?

Julie: (She gets up and begins to speak without being called on) When we came in last night my maid said, "Where is Nickie?" We looked and found Dad and Nickie in the family Room. (she sits)

Someone asks:

Who's Nickie?

Julie: My dog.

(. . .)

When all those whose initials were on the board have had a turn, -- Karen raises her hand.

Miss O.: You've had a turn, Karen. Can it wait til tomorrow? (Karen's hand stays up, but she doesn't respond) O.K., Karen. Take another turn.

Karen: (she faces the class, but says nothing)

Corey: (after an awkward pause) Oh! Not again!

Miss O.: That will do, Corey! Karen, you know how we do things at Show and Tell Time. What do you want to say?

Karen: (continues to be silent as she looks at Miss O., expressionless)

Miss O.: You may sit now. (she does) Show and Tell Time is over, children.

Analysis. Although there are similarities in the two Show and Tell Times, the focus of the activity its duration and placement in the school day, as well as the way it progresses reveal some key distinctions in the teachers' patterns of resolution to the dilemmas of schooling. Both teachers read names from a chalkboard list to call on children who want a turn to talk. Both give their full attention to what happens by listening and entering into the activity. In each classroom the child who has a turn stands in front of the group to speak, and children raise their hands to respond. Beyond this, however, it is the differences between the Show and Tell Times which prevail.

A look at when and for how long Show and Tell Time is scheduled reveals several differences. These arrangements reflect the teachers' dominant patterns of resolution particularly in relation to control of time and realm. Miss Orlette sets aside a segment of time each day following Physical Education class that lasts as long as there are volunteers to speak. Mrs. Reiss, on the other hand convenes Show and Tell Time at the end of the morning work period in whatever time remains following her instructional sessions with individuals and groups. Because the amount of time varies, Show and Tell Time in Mrs. Reiss's room is sometimes cut short or skipped to prevent arriving late for lunch. On other days, it is long enough for anyone (with completed assignments) who wants a turn to speak. This

can indicate that, for Mrs. Reiss. Show and Tell Time represents a lower status activity, that is, an activity which she considers less improtant than those for which she does schedule a set amount of time each day.

Additional differences can be seen in the way Show and Tell Time happens, particularly in regard to views of childhood and learning. With Miss Orlette, the activity takes on a rather informal social quality. A strong contributing factor here is the placement of Show and Tell Time immediately after Physical Education class. Children have had an opportunity to break away from their usual classroom department; they are physically relaxed and less focused on formal tasks. The practice of serving a snack in conjunction with Show and Tell Time also adds a less formal or academic tone. As children walk into the room they stop at the round table for a cup of juice and a cookie (in the example, a birthday treat of cupcakes). Although the child who is speaking stands in front of the group and children raise their hands to respond, others speak out to each other in any easy manner, much as they would if a snack were being served to a group of friends at home. Mrs. Reiss, on the other hand, places the activity at the end of the work period and immediately before lunch. Children are likely to be tired and hungry. Still, their teacher expects them to perform in the same formal, serious-minded manner as they do in the morning work period. The tie to completed work assignments makes participation in Mrs. Reiss's Show and Tell Time an implicit reward given to those who work fast; withheld from those who do not. Mrs. Reiss's characteristicly strong <u>teacher control</u> pattern inserts itself into the period as she corrects the way questions are phrased, emphasizes the way children are to organize their thoughts before speaking and enforces adherence to a strict form that requires one speaker at a time and disallows related comments from listeners. We see, for example, that when Peter (who has not been called on) speaks, the teacher asks that he and his comment be ignored. She tells Terry he is out of order when he tries to tell something rather than ask a questions. Also, Charlie is told how to state questions and Edward to "think first" before he speaks. We see that Mrs. Reiss de-emphasizes the social quality of the activity.

A look at the focus of Show and Tell Time in the two classrooms reveals their strongest differences and provides an image of the teachers' differential patterns of resolution, particularly in regard to knowledge and learning. The focus of Miss Orlette's Show and Tell Time appears to fall on the speaker, the content of what is said and whether or not children are saying and hearing the message.

With Mrs. Reiss, the focus rests more on the speaker's ability to form questions so listeners can show that they have heard what is said. Qustions are directed from the listeners to the speaker in Miss Orlette's room; from the speaker to the listeners in Mrs. Reiss's. This tends to make the activity more child-centered in Miss Orlett's room -- a knowledge as personal resolution. In Mrs. Reiss's room, on the other hand, there is more of a tendency to direct attention away from the child toward a display of the ability to form questions that the teacher considers "good" or the ability to repeat the information stated -- a public knowledge resolution. This gives the activity a test-like, impersonal quality. The segment in which Edward has a turn is a case in point. Mrs. Reiss reminds Edward to ask a question when he stops speaking and tells him how to organize his thoughts. We see her use the opportunity to reinforce a molecular language skill (dropping the final "e" when adding "ing"). However, very little attention is given to what he says. No one asks why Edward was hiding or what happened when he couldn't find a place to run. Clearly, in this segment, the teacher places a higher priority on the language skills involved than on the content of what Edward has to say.

Examples of Miss Orlette's focus during Show and Tell Time can be seen thoughtout the excerpt. When Kathie shows her shell collection, the teacher displays more of an interest in the experience Kathie shares than in using Show and Tell Time as an opportunity to identify the shells, that is, to teach the appropriate science or public knowledge involved. Carl's segment is another example. She helps him "save face" by providing an explanation for what he says once it is challenged, accepting his exaggeration as something typical of children this age. He is not chastized for exaggerating. Rather, he is simply told what he needs to do in order to be understood and believed. Helping him pinpoint the meaning of what he wants to say reinforces the valued nature of personal knowledge in this Show and Tell Time. That she invites the class to help Carl speak more accurately is another example of Miss Orlette's dominant pattern in favor of learning as social. Miss Orlette's control patterns are evident in the Show and Tell Time notes as well. Although she is clearly in charge here, it is also clear that students do share somewhat in control of operations. Children may chat quietly as long as they listen to the speaker. Children freely intervene, suggest changes in the sequence of speakers, point out that the teacher has skipped a person on th list, question what the speakers say, and take a turn without waiting to be called on by the teacher. We see,

then, that Miss Orlette's focus during Show and Tell Time directs attention toward her dominant patterns of resolution, particularly the knowledge as personal vs. knowledge as public dilemma.

A look at control and resistance show a further comparision between the two Show and Tell Times. In Mrs. Reiss's room resistance appears to be covert and control, overt. In Miss Orlette's room it is control which appears to be covert and resistance, overt. While these differences can be seen in the observation data, they are more clearly revealed in the interview notes.

It is obvious that Mrs. Reiss' dominant pattern of resolution during the period is one of teacher control, but levels of resistance among her children are not as obviously seen. Zia, for example, tells me that she knows very well how to ask the questions Mrs. Reiss wants, but she feigns ignorance because, "I get tired of making up questions." Bonnie displays anger at our interview following the activity, "It was my turn, not Omar's! I'll show her, I won't talk." (her emphasis) Edward, who playfully spelled out answers, says, "I was just trying to have some fun." When asked if he had trouble making up questions he responds, "No, I know how we're supposed to do it. I was just trying to have some fun." Not visible in the excerpt are the two children who may not take part because of incomplete daily assignments. One of the children, victor, consistently misses recess and Show and Tell Time because of unfinished work -- not because he cannot do the assignment (he displays strong ability in all academic areas; is admired by his classmates for his reading ability):

Rita: Why don't you finish your work in time?
Victor: I just dont want to.
Rita: You don't like recess or Show and Tell?
Victor: Sure I do. I just don't want to.
Rita: What don't you want to do?
Victor: All that stuff.

Miss Orlette's control patterns are less obvious. Still, she is very much in control. As long as the activity follows the norms she has established, the children may proceed in an informal manner, that is, some chatting and talking without being called on are permitted as long as they listen to the speaker. She intervenes to insist on "good listeners" when they do not. She cuts short Sara's wish to read as an inappropriate contribution to

Show and Tell Time. Informal reminders from students that the "Birthday Boy" should be given first turn to talk and the the teacher has skipped a person on the list are frequent conventions used by Miss Orlette at other times of the day to "See if you're all awake."

Karen's request for a second turn is an overt case of resistance since this is generally beyond the norms for Show and Tell Time. Her refusal to talk is also a public display outside the norms of the activity. Karen's explanation in our interview is puzzling but not an uncommon one for her over the year. When I ask why she wanted a second turn and then said nothing, she does not reply. Rather, she taps the table top, rocks her chair and changes the subject. When I ask the question again, her response is to put out her chin and smile.

Not apparant in the observation notes is Steve's non-participation. He choses to read a library book rather than take part. Interview notes indicate his explanation:

Rita:	I'm wondering why you were reading all through Show and Tell Time?
Steve:	Sometimes I just get tired of it. (makes a grimace)
Rita:	Of what:
Steve:	Of it all!
Rita:	All of what?
Steve	Just all of it (his emphasis)

As this comparison of the teachers' use of Show and Tell Time indicates, teachers' daily resolutions to schooling dilemmas establish the climate in which language literacy and oracy can occur and call attention to the manner in which <u>personal knowledge</u> enters the <u>public knowledge</u> realm of school.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Although the practical applications of language contributes to the development of language proficiency, US schools have persevered in a <u>formal language</u> over a <u>language in use</u> emphasis in languag curriculum. A focus on gainging isolated language skills taught and evaluated out of context has led to a serious neglect of the social aspects of language. Public concern grows over reduced test scores and the inability of our students and graduates to apply these skills. And yet, the remedy prescribed is largely "more of the same."

In its role as agent for the culture and society, schools can allow for change as well as continuity. However, the continuance of a formal language emphasis tends to reflect and legitimize the dominant culture. Buy disallowing personal (non-school) knowledge and emphasizing public (school) knowledge, language instruction not only limits language learning, it limits the content of that learning and its challenges. But, as Giroux (1983) indicates, control and autonomy among those students and teachers who do not accommadate to the status quo can take the form of resistance, and this resistance can lead to the production of culture, that is, the formulation of alternatives and change.

Receptive and expressive language ability is crucial, not only because it is central to all school learning, but because it establishes the basis for life-long communicative competance. The ability to put language to practical use to expand our knowledge, apply what we know, establish creative alternatives and resolutions to day-to-day issues has implications for cultural production and reporduction. It is tied directly to the possibility of achieving a critical human agency, one in which our own and others', clearly expressed and understood concerns can be explored.

Reference Notes

1. See Britton, 1970, Moffett, 1968, Barnes, 1975, Flanders, 1970, Stubbs, 1976.
2. See Berlak and Berlak, 1981, Giroux, 1983.
3. A more detailed discussion of the dilemmas of schooling occurs later in this paper in the section, "Show and Tell Time".
4. For example, see Hoggart, R., 1970, and Williams, R., 1967.
5. For example, see Willis, 1977.
6. For example, see Moffett, J., 1968.
7. The symbol, (. . .) indicates data has been omitted from the orginal notes.

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